



SPIRIT IN THE DESERT
P.O. BOX 3254 CAREFREE, AZ 85377

March 25, 2026

Dear Friends,

Over the past nine months, the Board of Directors has engaged in a thoughtful process of discernment and planning to ensure strong leadership for the future of Spirit in the Desert. On March 18, 2026, following a comprehensive planning period and national search, the Board extended an offer to Rika Beckley to serve as our next Executive Director, effective July 1.

Rika and her husband, Dwight, plan to spend time near the Center over the next few months and relocate permanently once they secure a home in the area. A lifelong Lutheran, Rika brings more than three decades of leadership experience in nonprofit ministry, higher education advancement, and hospitality. She holds a bachelor's degree in International Economics from Valparaiso University and a master's degree in Nonprofit Management from the Lilly Family School of Philanthropy at Indiana University.

Her professional background includes executive roles, retreat ministry service, and entrepreneurial experience in the hospitality sector. Most importantly, she brings a deep commitment to faith-based organizations and a relational approach aligned with the spirit and mission of this community.

In her own words, "From my first visit, I recognized that Spirit in the Desert offers something increasingly rare in our world: space for rest, healing, and renewed connection with God. I am honored to serve alongside this board and staff as we continue this important ministry."

As you will see in the enclosed 2025 Annual Report, we give thanks for the many ways God has guided this ministry and for the strong foundation now in place for the future of Spirit in the Desert. As this letter reaches you during Holy Week, we are especially mindful of the Spirit's power to renew and sustain us. We ask for your continued prayers as we move through this leadership transition and prepare for a season of growth.

As Eric prepares to conclude his tenure on July 1, we remain deeply grateful for his faithful leadership and the strong foundation he has helped build. We trust this transition reflects both continuity and new opportunity for Spirit in the Desert.

With gratitude,

Jennifer Braaten, Ed.D.
Chair, Board of Directors

Eric Simonson
Executive Director